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IS 501 Kingdom, Church, and World

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Warning! Preliminary Syllabus
Books will be as stated: Other Elements Subject to Change

**IS501 Christian Formation:
Kingdom, Church, and World**

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IS501, Spring 2002

Introduction

What is the mission of the church? Behind this question is a cluster of related questions, the most important focused on the nature of God's creative and redemptive purpose, its ongoing expression in the world, and its consummation in the eschaton. Participants in this course will explore how the church might discern, embrace, and participate in God's own mission.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate their understanding of the biblical metanarrative that comes to focus for us best in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God;
2. Identify the particular contribution of the Wesleyan tradition to our understanding of this metanarrative;
3. Draw out major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this metanarrative, especially as these are related to the nature and mission of the people of God;
4. Evaluate cultural products (e.g., literature, television, movies, advertisements, print media, music) in light of major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this metanarrative;
5. Exercise criticism with respect to one's own cultural context and discernment with respect to the context of others vis-à-vis major theological, moral, and philosophical implications of this metanarrative;
6. Articulate the ecclesial and missional implications of this metanarrative – specifically for one's own context and generally for our shared global context; and
7. Exhibit a heightened sense of commitment to serving the kingdom of God in mission in the world.

Required Reading:

Clapp, Rodney. *Border Crossings*. Brazos Press, 2000.
McClaren, Brian D. *A New Kind of Christian*. Jossey-Bass, 2001.
Newbiggen, Leslie. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1995.
Snyder, Howard. *God's Kingdom Now*. Wiff and Stock, 2001.
Wright, Tom. *The Challenge of Jesus*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1999.

Recommended Reading:

Hauerwas, Stanley and Will Willimon. *Resident Aliens*.

Ramachandra, Vinoth. *Gods that Fail: Modern Idolotry and Christian Mission*

Volf, Miroslav, Jürgen Moltmann, and Ellen T. Charry. *A Passion for God's Reign*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Evaluation:

- Active and Substantive Participation in Small Groups. (10 %)
- Active and Substantive Participation in On-Line Conferences. (10%)
- Kingdom Project and Presentation (20 %)
- Mid-Term (30%)
- Final-Exam (30 %)

Course Schedule

Introduction

Week 1. Introduction and Organization of the Course

- Small Groups: Selection, Process, Leadership, and Expectations
- Conferences: Selection, Process and Expectations
- Intro to Modified ExL Systems Test
- Course Objectives
- Course Procedures

Module One: Kingdom – Living the Biblical Story

Weeks 2-5

Objectives

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Articulate the importance of “story;”
2. Discern how cultural products participate in inviting us into certain stories;
3. Articulate the basis for the unity of Scripture in the overarching plan of God, from Creation to New Creation;
4. Articulate the hermeneutical importance of the incarnation for understanding the biblical story;
5. Articulate how Wesley’s understanding of the soteriological journey serves as a hermeneutical compass for reading the biblical story;

Small Groups

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and work through *Witness*

Conferences

- Complete a Modified ExL Systems Test
- Threaded discussion in teams based on questions posted by professor(s) on the reading assignments
- Examine (in teams) a cultural product for its storied character

Module Two: Kingdom and Church

Weeks 6-8

Objectives

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Enumerate significant ways in which the ongoing life of the people of God participates in and extends the biblical story;
2. Articulate how kingdom-living relates to a community of believers;
3. Articulate an ecclesiology oriented around participation in the kingdom;
4. Articulate basic forms of ecclesial practice (e.g., hospitality, mission) that are a necessary outgrowth of an ecclesial commitment to performing the kingdom.

Small Groups

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and work through *Witness*

Conferences

- Threaded discussion in teams based on questions posted by professor(s) on the reading assignments
- Examine a cultural product for its narrative storied character

Module Three: Kingdom, Church, and World

Weeks 9-13

Objectives

Having completed this module, students should be able to:

1. Articulate the significance of the kingdom in terms of its cosmological and eschatological significance (rather than in individual and subjective terms);
2. Demonstrate that they have begun the process of thinking theologically – i.e., situating life within the interpretive and critical horizons of a theological vision of the purpose of God for creation that comes into focus best in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom;
3. Draw out inferences of this view of the kingdom with respect to a range of social-ethical issues (e.g., racial reconciliation, environmental ethics, gender issues);
4. Demonstrate the importance of understanding one's world in performing the kingdom;

Small Groups

- Meet 50 min/week within the course schedule and work through *Witness*

Conferences

- Threaded discussion in teams based on questions posted by professor(s) on the reading assignments
- Examine (in teams) a cultural product for its storied character